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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION ONE OF TWO SAIGON 149

1966 JUL 2 AM 5 50

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

JULY 02

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. [redacted] SEVERAL LEADING CIVILIAN POLITICAL FIGURES DURING PAST FOUR DAYS HAVE REVEALED GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY DIRECTED TOWARD RECRUITMENT CANDIDATES AND FORMATION LISTS FOR ELECTIONS. AT SAME TIME THERE REMAINS UNCERTAINTY AND DISSATISFACTION WITH MANNER IN WHICH APPROACHING ELECTIONS BEING ORGANIZED GVN, EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO ARE PREPARING THEIR CANDI-

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DACIES. AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS NOT YET COMMITTED TO CONTESTING ELECTIONS, SUSPICION OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS AND DISSATISFACTION WITH POWERS OF ASSEMBLY ARE BEING USED TO JUSTIFY ATTITUDE OF ATTENTISM SO COMMON AMONG VIETNAMESE INTELLECTUALS.

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2. A PRESIDENT OF SAIGON CITY COUNCIL, LA THANH NGHE AND SEVERAL OF HIS COLLEAGUES FROM COUNCIL HAD ALMOST COMPLETED FOUR SEPARATE LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THREE SAIGON ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

NGHE/AND SAIGON COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT (PHO THAI GIA) PLAN TO HEAD ONE SLATE. THERE WILL ALSO BE SECOND SLATE IN THIS SAME ELECTORAL DISTRICT WHICH THEY HAVE NOT YET COMPLETED (IDEA BEING THAT CHANCES OF GETTING BEST PEOPLE ELECTED ARE INCREASED BY PUTTING THEM AT TOP OF TWO LISTS RATHER THAN CONCENTRATING THEM ALL IN ONE LIST); SAIGON COUNCIL SECRETARY GENERAL HO NGOC CU WILL HEAD SLATE IN ANOTHER ELECTORAL DISTRICT. NGHE IS WORKING WITH HIS CHINESE BUSINESS FRIENDS (HE IS HEAD OF VIETNAMESE ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRIALISTS) ON LIST FOR SAIGON'S THIRD ELECTORAL

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DECLASSIFIED

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 149/1 C O N FI D E N T I A L
DISTRICT IN CHINESE-POPULATED CHOLON AREA. THE THREE NON-CHINESE LISTS WILL INCLUDE BUDDHISTS AND CATHOLICS, NORTHERNERS AND SOUTHERNERS, AND WILL NOT BE AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS GROUP.

B. [redacted] WHILE HE AND HIS FRIENDS WERE MOVING AHEAD, THERE WERE MANY PEOPLE WHO STILL DID NOT BELIEVE GVN SERIOUS ABOUT HOLDING FREE ELECTIONS. HE FELT THAT GVN NEEDED MAKE GREATER EFFORT STRESS IMPORTANCE OF ASSEMBLY AND OF INDIVIDUALS PRESENTING SELVES AS CANDIDATES. IN CONTEXT OF GVN ATTITUDE TOWARD ELECTIONS, [redacted] WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHILE HE HAD NOT HEARD OF ANY ACTUAL NAMES THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT GVN INTENDED TO PRESENT CANDIDATES IN SAIGON. HE BELIEVED THEY MIGHT DO WELL IN CENTRAL AREA OF SAIGON WHERE HEADQUARTERS OF SOME MILITARY UNITS WERE LOCATED AND GVN COULD PRESUMABLY COUNT UPON SEVERAL THOUSAND VOTES FROM MEMBERS ARMED FORCES. b-1 ed

3. OLD-TIME POLITICO DR. HONG CO BINH. PRESENTLY MEMBER SAIGON CITY COUNCIL, [redacted] PLANNED TO RUN FOR ASSEMBLY DESPITE RESERVATIONS b-1 ed

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 149/1 C O N F I D E N T I A L
AS TO LIMITATIONS PLACED ON ITS POWERS. HE WOULD NOT RUN FROM SAIGON BUT WOULD CONTEST SEAT FROM TUYEN DUC PROVINCE, WORKING WITH HIS CLOSE FRIEND NGUYEN DUY QUANG, CHAIRMAN OF DALAT CITY COUNCIL WHO WOULD CONTEST SEAT FROM DALAT CITY.

4. AT RECENT DINNER PARTY DR. PHAM QUANG DAN AND LAWYER TRAN VAN TUYEN VOICED CERTAIN DOUBTS ABOUT THE ELECTIONS. IN THE FINE TRADITION OF CYNICAL SAIGON POLITICIANS, THEY QUESTIONED DIRECTORATE'S GOOD FAITH AND REAL IMPORTANCE OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ESPECIALLY IF IT HAD NO LEGISLATIVE POWERS AND APPEARED TO BE FORECLOSED FROM TRANSFORMING ITSELF INTO A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ONCE CONSTITUTION HAD BEEN DRAFTED. DR. DANG VAN SUNG, EDITOR-PUBLISHER OF THE INFLUENTIAL DAILY CHINH LUAN WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT TOOK SHARP ISSUE WITH HIS TWO OLD FRIENDS, URGED THEM TO PARTICIPATE. LINE OF ARGUMENT THAT SUNG TOOK WAS THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AND A CONSTITUTION WOULD BE DRAFTED. IF WORTHWHILE ELEMENTS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN ASSEMBLY OTHERS WERE MORE THAN WILLING TO SERVE IN

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PAGE 5 RUMJIR 149/1 C O N F I D E N T I A L
ASSEMBLY, WOULD PROBABLY PRODUCE AN UNSATISFACTORY CONSTITUTION WITH WHICH COUNTRY MIGHT BE SADDLED FOR SOME TIME TO COME. TUYEN INDICATED THAT HE WOULD DEFER ANY DECISION TO STAND AS A CANDIDATE, BUT DAN IS RUNNING AND HAS ALREADY FORMED SLATES FOR BOTH ELECTION DISTRICTS IN GIA DINH. (EMBTEL 5813) LODGE
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1966 JUL 2 AM 5 59

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION TWO OF TWO SAIGON 149

JULY 02

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. COMMENT: SUSPICIOUS ATTITUDE ON PART OF LOCAL POLITICIANS TOWARD THE MILITARY MAY BE HONEST AND JUSTIFIED BY THEIR PAST EXPERIENCE, AND AT THIS STAGE IS COMPOUNDED BY SOME UNCERTAINTY AS TO GOVERNMENTS POLITICAL INTENTIONS. HOWEVER, VIETNAMESE POLITICIANS ARE BORN WITH FULLY DEVELOPED SUSPICIOUS NATURES, AND WOULD BE CRITICAL OF WHATEVER PROCESS WHICH IS NOT OF THEIR OWN DEVISING.

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 149/2 C O N F I D E N T I A L
END COMMENT

6. ELECTION PREPARATIONS PROCEEDING APACE IN PROVINCES, WITH CATHOLICS AND VNQDD (DANANG TEL RPTD DEPT 001) PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN RESPECTIVE AREAS OF STRENGTH. CATHOLIC CITIZENS' BLOC HAS ORGANIZED "TRAINING CLASSES ON CIVIC EDUCATION" IN THREE VILLAGES OF GIA DINH AND BIEN HOA AND SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO DELTA AND CENTRAL LOWLANDS TO COORDINATE ELECTION STRATEGY. BLOC SAYS IT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS AS AN ORGANIZATION BUT WILL "LET THE CATHOLIC FAITHFUL RUN AS NATIONAL CITIZENS" AND WILL SUPPORT OTHER "NATIONALIST CANDIDATES.

7. HOA HAO UNDOUBTEDLY WELL-ORGANIZED IN SIX PROVINCES WHERE THEY DOMINATED PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR. POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND PROVINCIAL REPORTER PLAN TO ATTEND CEREMONIES AT "HOLY LAND" JULY 6 (27 TH ANNIVERARY OF FOUNDING OF SECT) AND EXPECT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON EXTENT OF HOA HAO PREPARATIONS.

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7. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HELD SEMINAR JUNE 30-JULY 1 ON ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS FOR PROVINCE ADMINISTRATIVE DEPUTIES, CHEFS DE CABINET, ETC.

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 149/2 C O N F I D E N T I A L
TRAN VAN AN, IN CAPACITY OF CHAIRMAN OF ELECTORAL LAW DRAFTING COMMITTEE, TOLD SEMINAR THAT DIRECTORATE AMENDMENTS DEPRIVING CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF LEGISLATIVE POWERS AND ESTABLISHING LIST-VOTING IN MULTIPLE-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES WERE "NOT CONTRARY TO SPIRIT ENVISIONED" BY DRAFTING COMMITTEE. HE ADDED THAT LIST-VOTING WOULD ENCOURAGE POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATIONALIST ELEMENTS TO UNITE AND CO-OPERATE, THEREBY ENSURING ASSEMBLY WOULD BE REPRESENTATIVE AND EFFECTIVE.

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